

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MILAN 00529 01 OF 02 070325Z
ACTION EUR-12

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TO AMEMBASSY ROME
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5934

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 0529

EO 11652: GDSO
TAGS: PINT IT
SUBJECT: CORRIERE EDITORS APPRAISE MORO CRISIS

SUMMARY. EDITORS OF ITALY'S LEADING MIDDLE OF THE ROAD DAILY
TELL AMBASSADOR GARDNER THEY FEAR NEGOTIATIONS WITH
TERRORISTS FOR MORO RELEASE AND PRESS FOR US INTERVENTION
TO STIFFEN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC REFUSAL. END SUMMARY.

1. IN SECOND OF OFF THE RECORD MEETINGS WITH EDITORIAL
BOARDS OF MAJOR DAILIES, AMBASSADOR GARDNER ON MARCH 30
LUNCHEDED WITH EDITORS MILAN'S CORRIERE DELLA SERA, ITALY'S
MOST INFLUENTIAL DAILY. EDITOR FRANCO DI BELLA AND
ASSISTANT EDITOR GASPARO BARBIELLINI AMIDEI ARE BOTH CAREER
NEWSPAPER MEN, THE FORMER NEWS ORIENTED, THE LATTER CULTURE
ORIENTED, CATHOLIC, MIDDLE-AGED AND SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVE
WHO ARE RETURNING CORRIERE TO THE TRADITIONAL PRO-GOVERNMENT
POSTURE THAT IT HAS OCCUPIED FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY. LEO
VALIANI, NON-CATHOLIC, WARTIME ANTI-FASCIST LEADER, AND FIVE YEARS
IMPRISONED FORMER ACTION PARTY MP NOW ECONOMIC HISTORIAN AND IN-
CREASINGLY FREQUENT LEAD POLITICAL EDITORIALIST FOR CORRIERE, WAS
THIRD OF JOURNALISTS.

2. CENTRAL CONCERN OF EDITORS WAS MORO CASE WHICH THEY
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PAGE 02 MILAN 00529 01 OF 02 070325Z

DESCRIBED AS OPENING NEW PHASE OF ITALIAN POST-WAR POLITICS.
MORO LETTER (MARCH 29) HAD JUST BEEN RELEASED AND POSITIONS
STILL JELLING ON KEY QUESTION OF BARGAINING FOR HIS RELEASE
IMPLIED IN TEXT.

3. ALL THREE DEEPLY WORRIED THAT DC WOULD NOT REJECT BARGAINING.
OF MARCH 30 MORNING PAPERS, ONLY DC POPOLO HAD NOT CARRIED LETTER AND

STORY. DI BELLA SAID THIS DUE TO PROFOUND SPLIT IN DC ON BARGAINING. CORRIERE HAD ALSO CHECKED WITH VATICAN, MENTIONED IN LETTER AS INTERMEDIARY. POPE, SAID EDITORS, WAS NOT OVER THE HILL AND ABLE TO PLAY NO REAL ROLE. BUT VATICAN REPLY ON LETTER WAS TO KEEP DOOR OPEN TO MEDIATION WITH BRIGATE ROSSE. COMMUNISTS, ON OTHER HAND, HAD IMMEDIATELY TAKEN A TOUGH NO NEGOTIATION STANCE.

4. DANGER IN NEGOTIATION WAS TO STRENGTHEN POWER OF TERRORISTS WHO WOULD GAIN RECOGNITION AS STATE, SOMETHING LIKE PLO. ENTIRE CREDIBILITY AND SURVIVAL OF POST-WAR ITALIAN STATE WOULD BE JEOPARDIZED.

5. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, DI BELLA AND AMIDEI BELIEVED MORO WAS FINISHED. EVEN IF HE EVENTUALLY RELEASED, THEY THOUGHT HE COULD NEVER REGAIN POWER, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF MARCH 29 LETTER DESPITE ITS HAVING BEEN EXTRACTED FROM HIM BY FORCE. VALIANI LESS SURE CITING RECOVERY OF OTHER POLITICIANS LIKE LEON BLUM.

6. DI BELLA AND AMIDEI ALSO DIFFERED FROM VALIANI ON IMPACT OF MORO EXIT. FORMER SAW GOOD CHANCE OF DC SPLIT AND ITS DECLINE IN ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP. ALL QUICKLY DISMISSED FANFANI, ZACCAGNINI, BARTOLOMEI AND PICCOLI LEAVING ONLY ANDREOTTI, FORLANI AND MAYBE GALLONI. WHILE DI BELLA AND AMIDEI SAW ITALIAN DEMOCRACY OOZING DOWN DRAIN, VALIANI DISAGREED. DEMOCRACY HAD UNEXPECTED RESILIENCE. IT DID NOT CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MILAN 00529 01 OF 02 070325Z

DEPEND ON ONE MAN AND LACKED DECISIVENESS OF TOTALITARIAN SYSTEM. BUT NEITHER DID IT SUFFER SO MUCH FROM LOSS OF SINGLE LEADER, HOWEVER POWERFUL.

7. IN ANY EVENT, ALL EMPHATIC THAT US HAD TO PUT ITS WEIGHT INTO BALANCE TO STIFFEN DC REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH BR. VALIANI WANTED FBI ADVISOR TO TELL ANDREOTTI WHAT TO DO. AMIDEI ARGUED THAT NO NATO ALLY HAD RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE SEPARATELY WITH ENEMY SO ALLIES SHOULD INTERVENE. DI BELLA WANTED US IN EVERY WAY TO LEAN ON ANDREOTTI TO BE TOUGH AND CRACK DOWN.

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PAGE 01 MILAN 00529 02 OF 02 070325Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MILAN 0529

8. HERE ALL AGREED THAT GOVERNMENT COULD DO MORE. PROBLEM WAS THAT POLICE COULD NOT GET TOUGH UNLESS GOVERNMENT WOULD BACK THEIR ACTIONS. AND MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND ANDREOTTI NOT WILLING. CONSEQUENTLY, PUBLIC LOSING FURTHER CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT. WEEKS OF POLICE SEARCH AND NO RESULTS WERE HURTING GOVERNMENT BADLY. AS SITUATION GOT WORSE, AND MORO STILL NOT FOUND, DEMAND FOR INCLUSION OF PCI IN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE IRRESISTIBLE. IF COMMUNISTS BROUGHT IN AND GIVEN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR THEY WOULD BACK THE POLICE AND FIND MORO. WHO, AGREED EDITORS, COULD IMAGINE DC RUNNING ELECTION CAMPAIGN AGAINST PCI AFTER THAT? IN SHORT, IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR DC TO GET TOUGH AND DEFEAT BRIGATE ROSSE IF COMMUNISTS TO BE KEPT OUT OF GOVERNMENT. AND THAT WAS WHY US HAD TO INTERVEN RIGHT NOW. COULD BE A QUESTION OF HOURS OR DAYS.

9. AMBASSADOR ASSURED THAT US IS PROVIDING ALL APPROPRIATE HELP TO GOI AND REITERATED WELL-KNOWN LIMITS ON ASSISTANCE WHICH THE US CAN OFFER TOWARD SOLUTION OF BASICALLY ITALIAN INTERNAL PROBLEM.

10. AMIDEI ARGUED THAT IF ITALY COULD SURVIVE THE SHORT TERM DANGER OF INCLUSION OF THE PCI IN GOVERNMENT, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT IN THE LONGER TERM THE DANGER WOULD RECEDE. THE SCHOOL
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PAGE 02 MILAN 00529 02 OF 02 070325Z

ELECTIONS WERE A SIGN OF CATHOLIC REVIVAL AND THE RISING REJECTION OF PERMISSIVENESS AND VIOLENCE POINTED IN THE SAME DIRECTION. IF NATIONAL ELECTIONS HAD BEEN HELD THE DAY AFTER MORO'S KIDNAPPING, AMIDEI WAS SURE THE DC WOULD HAVE SCORED A GREAT SUCCESS.

11. THE COMMUNISTS THEMSELVES WERE IN PROFOUND EVOLUTION AND HAVING TROUBLE. THERE WERE REALLY TWO COMMUNIST PARTIES. ALL THREE EDITORS AGREED THAT BERLINGUER AND THE MAJORITY THAT KEPT HIM IN CONTROL WERE AS SINCERE DEMOCRATS AS ANYONE ELSE

IN ITALY. THEY WERE NOT A THREAT IN THEMSELVES TO ITALIAN DEMOCRACY. BUT THEY HELD THEIR CONTROL OF THE PCI BY MASTERY OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATION FROM TOP TO BOTTOM. THAT WAS ONE PARTY. THE OTHER WAS THE RADICAL STALINIST/LENINIST RANK AND FILE WHICH COULD RISE UP AND THROW OUT THE GERLINGUER MACHINE. AND THAT, IN DI BELLA AND AMIDEI'S VIEW, WAS THE DANGER.

12. WHAT SHOULD THE US POSTURE NOW BE?

13. ALL AGREED THAT THE JANUARY 12 PUBLIC STATEMENT HAD BEEN NECESSARY AND USEFUL. IT HAD REMOVED ANY CONCEIVEABLE DOUBT ABOUT THE US ATTITUDE. THERE SHOULD BE NO MORE PUBLIC STATEMENTS BUT THE US SHOULD DRIVE HOME ITS POSITION IN PRIVATE. IT WAS ESSENTIAL NOT TO MAKE THE DC OR THE CORRIERE DELLA SERA LOOK LIKE AMERICAN SPOKESMEN THAT WON VOTES FOR DE GASPERI BUT IT WOULD LOSE VOTES TODAY.

14. WAS THERE A RISK THAT OUR MAKING COMMUNIST TRAVEL TO THE US EASIER AND GRADUAL EXPANSION OF CONTACTS WITH THE PCI WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS OUR APPROVAL FOR THE PCI?

15. ALL THREE EDITORS DISMISSED SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. THE
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PAGE 03 MILAN 00529 02 OF 02 070325Z

JAN 12 STATEMENT HAD REMOVED ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE US ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COMMUNISTS. THEY SAW NO HARM IN CONTACTS WITH THEM AND IN FACT FAVORED SUCH CONTACTS. AMIDEI ADDED THAT THE EARLIER POLICY OF ISOLATION AND DISCRIMINATION HAD NOT WORKED AND HAD EVEN BEEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.

16. THE REPORT HAS BEEN CLEARED BY EMBASSY PAO, WHO ATTENDED LUNCHEON, AND IN SUBSTANCE WBY AMBASSADOR.FINA

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